

USACHPPM

HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

26 September 2002

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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Hot ISSUES

Atopic Dermatitis Could Rule Out Smallpox Shots for Large Share of Population

17 September, 2002: [CIDRAP](#) News reports the current high prevalence of eczema, or atopic dermatitis (AD), suggests that a large share of the population could be at risk for the serious side effect of eczema vaccinatum (EV) if they underwent smallpox vaccination, according to specialists writing in the September *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*. The lifetime prevalence of AD is now estimated at 10% to 15%, writes Renata J. M. Engler, MD, of Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, and two colleagues. [View Report](#)

Bioterrorism Simulator Release in October

17 September: The Business Wire reported Anesoft Corporation announced the completion of the Bioterrorism Simulator, the first software product of its kind to help prepare physicians, nurses, and other emergency personnel to respond to a chemical or biological attack. Release is set for early October. The program teaches proper management of patients involved in biological and chemical terrorism events including: early recognition of presenting signs and symptoms; diagnostic confirmation of the agents used; and prompt decontamination, isolation, and treatment. Communication instructions for patients, families, public health agencies, [CDC](#), and the media are also included. [View details](#)

Even Low Levels of Radon May Increase Lung Cancer Risks

19 September: Reuters Health reported long-term exposure to radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas, can more than double a person's risk of developing lung cancer, even at levels below those thought to pose little harm, scientists in Spain have found. Currently, health experts recommend that people in buildings and homes where radon gas levels exceed 4 picoCuries per liter (pCi/L) take action--like increasing ventilation--to lower levels of the gas. "The results of this study suggest that residential radon constitutes a risk factor for lung cancer," wrote Barros-Dios and colleagues. "Although reported elsewhere, this is the first study to find that, at low doses,...radon constitutes a risk factor for the general population." SOURCE: American Journal of Epidemiology 2002;165:548-555. [View Abstract](#)

Smallpox Vaccination Clinic Guide Released [CDC](#)

24 September: The CDC writes: "The *CDC Smallpox Response Plan and Guidelines* now contains a very important addition to our smallpox preparedness efforts—a comprehensive annex titled "Smallpox Vaccination Clinic Guide." This new section—part of the upcoming

Version 3 of the *CDC Smallpox Response Plan and Guidelines*—describes the operational and logistical considerations associated with implementing a large-scale voluntary vaccination program in response to a confirmed smallpox outbreak. This provides details on all aspects of immunization clinic operations and staffing and includes an example of a model smallpox vaccination clinic.” [View Smallpox Vaccination Clinic Guide](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Smallpox Plans](#)

Study: Pill, Weight Gain Not Linked

23 September: Newsday.com reported a long term study shows weight gain is not associated with taking birth control pills. The study of 66 women who were followed through their teen years to age 21 showed that the pill-users and nonusers were not significantly different from each other in body weight or percentage of body fat. Of the 66 women, 39 used birth control pills for an average of 28 months and a minimum of six months; all still used the pill at age 21. The 27 nonusers had never taken oral contraceptives. Researchers took blood samples and X-ray measurements from the participants and tracked their body composition through their teen years. Participants answered questions about physical activity so researchers could adjust results for their level of activity. Tom Lloyd, one of the authors, said the study provides physicians with a significant piece of information that they can use in counseling patients to stay on the contraceptives. It should be noted however, that while the long duration of the study is a benefit, there were some study limitations. [View Original Report](#)

Study: Epilepsy Drug Helps Migraines

23 September: Newsday.com reported the epilepsy drug topiramate appears to prevent migraine headaches -- and unlike some other migraine medications that seem to attract pounds, its main side effect is weight loss. In a study of more than 400 migraine sufferers given varying doses of topiramate vs. placebos for four months, about half found their number and duration of migraines cut in half, said Dr. Stephen Silberstein of Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. The best-treated patients took 100 or 200 milligrams of topiramate a day, a lower dose than is used for epilepsy. One reported side effect was weight loss. Patients lost, on average, 3.8 percent of their starting body weight, Silberstein said. Topiramate was tested for migraines because somewhat like epilepsy patient do, migraine sufferers have abnormally excitable brain nerve cells that, when triggered, fire across important pain centers to awaken nerve pain and inflame blood vessels. Some drugs that fight epilepsy also suppress abnormal neuron firings. [View Original Report](#)

Washington: Plan to Protect U.S. Agriculture From Bioterror Attack

12 September: National Academy of Sciences reports The United States is vulnerable to agricultural bioterrorism and needs a comprehensive plan to defend against it, says a new report from the National Academies' National Research Council. The United States cannot rapidly detect and identify many pests and pathogens and could not quickly respond to a large-scale attack, which would overwhelm existing laboratory and field resources. "Biological agents that could be used to harm crops or livestock are widely available and pose a major threat to U.S. agriculture," said Harley W. Moon, chair of the committee that wrote the report, and professor of veterinary medicine, Iowa State University, Ames. "Part of the plan to defend against agricultural bioterrorism should be to enhance our basic understanding of the biology of

pests and pathogens so we can develop new tools for surveillance and new ways to control an outbreak."

Printed copies of [Link to Study](#)

West Nile Appears Able to Paralyze

20 September: Washington Post reported West Nile virus apparently has caused six people in Mississippi and Louisiana to develop polio-like paralysis. The polio-like syndrome, which has left several victims struggling for their lives on a respirator, may be a direct manifestation of West Nile infection. Most of the new paralysis cases reported have occurred among people who were previously healthy and middle-aged. The extent of the paralysis varies widely: Some victims lost the use of an arm or a leg, while several others have needed ventilators to enable them to breath, CDC officials said. Their likelihood of recovery remained unclear. In the lead article of the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, a team urged doctors to be alert to polio-like symptoms, especially if West Nile virus is present in the area. The report said the symptoms can be confused with a condition known as Guillain-Barré syndrome, and warned doctors against quickly treating for that disease because it could jeopardize patients with the polio-like complications from West Nile virus. [View Washington Post Report.](#) [View MMWR Report](#)

USCENTCOM

UAE Free From Malaria

24 September: The Gulf News reported The UAE is malaria-free thanks to the successful eradication program carried out in the last three decades. Nevertheless cases of 'imported' malaria are still registered in the local hospitals and the vigilance of medical experts remains high. Last year there were only 35 positive cases of malaria in the UAE population. All of these cases were contracted abroad. Dr Abdelaziz Mohammed Abdalla, Head of the Malaria Control Section at the Department of Preventive Medicine explains the eradication program: "To conform with the WHO strategy of 'Roll Back Malaria', we have implemented a complex program featuring multiple actions in several frames including early diagnosis and prompt medical treatment of the cases; early detection of epidemics; environmental management in collaboration with the municipalities and the Ministry of Health; integrated vector control through insecticide spraying by the Municipalities and the improving of the irrigation methods; strengthening of the surveillance of malaria cases and many others." [View original report](#)

USEUCOM

Central African Republic: Anti-leprosy Campaign in West

19 September: [IRIN](#) reported an anti-leprosy campaign has been conducted in western regions of the Central African Republic (CAR) with the aim of educating the population about preliminary signs of leprosy. The campaign, which ran from 4-14 September, included the training of nurses and medical assistants in caring for lepers. CAR is among the 15 nations in the world where the rate of leprosy is still very high. The CAR government - in partnership with the World Health Organization, Association d'Aide aux Lepreux Emmaus Suisse and Alliance Mondiale de Lutte

contre la Lepre - has distributed free drugs to fight leprosy in all hospitals and health centers in the country. [View original report](#)

France: French Agency Rules British Beef is Safe

20 September: Reuters reports France moved a step closer to ending its six-year ban on British beef over fears of mad cow disease on Friday as its national food safety agency said the meat was no longer a danger to public health. The government, potentially facing a daily fine from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) for not ending the unilateral ban, has always said it could not change its position on the embargo until AFSSA had delivered its opinion. Paris has been reluctant to bow to international pressure, particularly as several French nationals have died of the human version of mad cow, linked to eating meat infected with the disease, also known as BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). [Link to Article](#)

Israel: Asian Tiger Mosquito Found

19 September: Reuters reported the Asian Tiger mosquito, which can spread potentially fatal diseases, has been found in Israel for the first time, the Environment Ministry said in a statement on Thursday. It said its workers found the mosquitoes in water pools in used tires piled in a field near Lod, a city in central Israel. Environment Minister Tzahi Hanegbi ordered Israelis to destroy used tires and report potential breeding spots, such as small water pockets and piles of tire scraps. The striped mosquito spreads diseases such as Dengue fever and yellow fever. [View Article](#)

Red Cross Warns Against Outbreak of Meningitis in Africa

19 September: Voice of America Reported unless an affordable vaccine is quickly produced, tens of thousands of Africans may die because of a newly emerging strain of meningitis. In an effort to combat the disease, officials from the World Health Organization are hosting a conference next week in Burkina Faso, where the new strain of meningitis made its first African appearance. There is a vaccine that protects against the W-135 strain of meningitis, but it costs between \$5 and \$50. This is far more expensive than the vaccine that is used to treat the more commonly found A and C strains of meningitis, which costs just 25 cents a dose. The so-called meningitis belt stretches from the West African coast to the Horn of Africa in the east. It encompasses about 200 million people, 140 million in Nigeria alone. The meningitis season begins in November and lasts until May. Red Cross epidemiologist, Bernard Moriniere, says the new strain of meningitis is likely to cause a major health crisis in Africa. Dr. Moriniere says with no vaccines available this year, the only way to reduce the mortality rate is to detect meningitis cases early and bring the victims to a treatment center where they can get proper care. [View VOA report.](#)

Zimbabwe: UNICEF Provides Funding to Help Control Cholera Epidemic

19 September: [IRIN](#) reported due to the cholera death toll in Zimbabwe's Masvingo province rising to 19, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has provided \$210,000 to the ministry of health for urgent measures to control the spread of the epidemic. Since August, 400 people have been

affected by the waterborne disease, which is spread by poor sanitation. The death toll for the epidemic, which is centered in the remote Zaka and Bikita districts, rose from 10 to 19 in one week. [View original report.](#)

USJFCOM

Breast-feeding May Not Ward Off Allergies, Asthma

20 September: Reuters Health reported a new long-term study is challenging the notion that breast-feeding helps protect children from developing allergies and asthma, one of the widely promoted potential benefits of breast-feeding. In fact, researchers found that of the more than 1,000 children they followed to age 26, those who were breast-fed for at least 4 weeks were more likely to develop asthma or various types of allergies. The findings are published in the September 21st issue of *The Lancet*. SOURCE: *The Lancet* 2002; 360:887-888, 901-907.

[View Article](#)

FDA Advisors Back Stronger Acetaminophen Warning

20 September: Reuters Health reported advisors to the US Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)) urged the agency on Thursday to require a stronger warning on acetaminophen product packaging to stress that misuse of the popular pain reliever can lead to liver toxicity. Acetaminophen is found in Tylenol, but is also in almost 200 different products, including cold and flu remedies. Taken by about 100 million Americans a year, acetaminophen is the most widely used nonprescription drug in the US. Overdoses are the most often cited cause of acetaminophen-associated liver toxicity. According to federal figures, acetaminophen overdoses lead to about 56,000 emergency room visits, 26,000 hospitalizations and 450 deaths a year.

[View Article](#)

FDA OKs Chronic Hepatitis B Drug

22 September: Newsday. The [FDA](#) approved a new Hepatitis B drug, adefovir dipivoxil, on 20 September. It will be sold as Hepsera, and is the first new therapy in years for an estimated 1.2 million Americans who suffer with the potentially deadly liver infection. The treatment, made by Gilead Sciences Inc., is just one of three therapies for patients with hepatitis B — a virus that can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. It is transmitted through blood, body fluids, shared needles and from mother to child. Original studies demonstrated that large doses of the drug could cause kidney damage. Subsequent studies show that smaller doses didn't cure the infection, but liver cirrhosis improved in between 56 percent and 66 percent of patients testing the drug. [View Newsday Report](#) [View FDA Report](#)

Smokers More Likely to Quit if Spouse Does

19 September: Reuters Health Researchers found that middle-aged smokers married to other smokers--generally among the most unwilling to kick the habit--are more likely to quit when both spouses make the attempt together. Past research has highlighted the importance of a supportive spouse during a smoker's quit attempt. The new study shows that for both men and

women, having a smoking spouse join them in the attempt may boost the odds of its success-- regardless of other factors that affect smokers' ability to kick the habit, such as age, income and education. SOURCE: Journal of Aging and Health 2002;14:336-354. [View News Report](#)

Ultrasonography Improves Cancer Screening of Dense Breasts

19 September: Reuters Health reported the sensitivity of mammography declines significantly with increasing breast density, to as low as 48% among women with the densest breasts, according to the results of a new study. Dr. Thomas M. Kolb of Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York presented findings for 11,130 asymptomatic women who underwent a total of 27,825 breast cancer screening sessions, which consisted of mammography and physical examination. Adding ultrasonography to breast cancer screening for women with dense breasts increased detection to 94% in those with the highest density. (Radiology 2002;225:165-175) [View Article](#)

Untreated Maternal UTI may Increase Risk of Mental Retardation in Offspring

19 September: Reuters Health reported on a study where it was found nearly one in four women with urinary tract infections (UTIs) during pregnancy may not fill their antibiotic prescriptions, and approximately 3% of cases of mental retardation may be attributable to untreated UTIs. These findings were presented by Dr. Suzanne McDermott, with the University of South Carolina at the first annual Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Conference on Birth Defects, Developmental Disabilities, and Disability and Health in Atlanta. Dr. McDermott and colleagues analyzed the relationship between the trimester of fetal exposure to maternal UTIs, with or without antibiotic treatment, and the occurrence of mental retardation and fetal death. [View Article](#)

Update: Listeriosis Outbreak Investigation

18 September: The [CDC](#) reported that it is working with several State Health Departments in investigating a cluster of *Listeria* infections. The *Listeria* bacterium has been isolated and pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE)-matched in 26 patients, which suggests that these patients acquired illness from the same food. Case-patients live in southeastern Pennsylvania (12), New York City (8), New York State (2), Maryland (2), Connecticut (1), and Michigan (1). All patients were hospitalized and four have died (2 in New York City, 1 in Michigan and 1 in Pennsylvania). Federal and state public health officials are working to determine the food that caused these illnesses. These illnesses were first reported in the summer, and cases continued to be reported in September. [View Press Release](#)

USPACOM

Bangladesh - Dengue Fever Outbreak

16 September: [IFRC](#) reported Dengue Fever is sweeping through major towns across Bangladesh. Since the beginning of July, 49 people have died and over 4,000 have been hospitalized from the disease. [View Article](#)

Indonesian Migrant Workers Fleeing Malaysia are Being Sheltered on the Island of Nunukan

17 September: [IFRC](#) reported Indonesian migrant workers fleeing Malaysia are being sheltered on the island of Nunukan while waiting to return to their homes elsewhere in Indonesia. Food, water, health and sanitation facilities are lacking but the Indonesia Red Cross is stepping up its efforts to ensure conditions are improved. Thousands of migrant Indonesian workers, considered illegal by the Malaysian government and who fled the country before a new immigration law came into effect at the end of August, are now in a desperate plight. The migrant workers, 162,000 of them who arrived on the island of Nunukan in Indonesia during the past four months, have returned to their homeland with no immediate jobs, homes, or access to health care. Approximately 18,000 people remain on Nunukan. Sixty-eight people have so far died in the camps from diarrhea, malaria and respiratory problems. The number of people that suddenly poured into the town has overwhelmed Nunukan's only public health center with 10 beds. [View Article](#)

Survey Finds AIDS Awareness Still Low in China

23 September: People's Daily reported The public in big cities and small towns in China know shockingly little about the rapidity of the spread of HIV/AIDS in their country, a recent survey has shown. The survey, conducted among 6,835 adults in selected cities and towns across the country, found that less than 30 per cent of the people surveyed know how to protect themselves from AIDS. The survey shows that although more than 93 per cent and 82 per cent of residents in big cities and small towns respectively have heard of AIDS, they are not clear on how it is transmitted or how to protect themselves. When asked if condoms could protect people from AIDS infection, only 31.5 per cent of city residents and 23.5 per cent of town residents answered "yes." The research showed that people regard contraception as the most important function of condoms, while only 3 per cent of the respondents use condoms to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases. [View original report](#)

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Nothing Significant to Report

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiupdate/>.

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ACRONYMS

BMJ – British Medical Journal
BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
BW-Business Wire
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIDRAP – Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
DoD - Department of Defense
DOE – Department of Energy
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FDA – Food and Drug Administration
GN-Gulf News
HSN-Health Scout News
IFRC – International Federal of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Networks, part of the [UN](#) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
MMWR-Morbidity Mortality Weekly Report
NAS – National Academies of Science
NIH – National Institutes of Health
NIOSH – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
PD-People’s Daily
PNAS – Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
RH- Reuters Health
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
VOA – Voice of America, an international multimedia broadcasting service funded by the US Government
WHO – World Health Organization
WP – Washington Post